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*Focus on*  
**Spelling**  
DIANE SNOWBALL

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This series of four videotapes is designed to complement the book *Spelling K–8: Planning and Teaching* by Diane Snowball and Faye Bolton. Each videotape includes footage of classroom teachers demonstrating how they teach spelling, with commentary by Diane Snowball and the teachers on important issues in teaching spelling. Each video focuses on a different aspect of spelling:

Learning Words  
Exploring Sounds  
Investigating Letters and Spelling Patterns  
Discovering Generalizations

This guide helps you link readings from *Spelling K–8* with different segments from the videotapes. The notes for each tape include potential workshop activities, related reading suggestions, and critical questions to discuss.

## Using the Videotapes: Some General Principles

Using videotapes in a workshop setting presents special challenges. Most of our experience with viewing television is passive. Instructors need to work hard to prepare participants for a more active role in watching these videotapes. Here are some good ways to prepare viewers:

1. Check out equipment and sound in advance. Obviously, you'll want to have the videotape segments cued to the right spot in each tape. But it is surprising how few workshop coordinators do sound checks for videotapes. After you begin running any segment, walk to the back of the room and listen to the tape. The goal is to have the sound as low as possible, but still loud enough so that the participants in the back can hear clearly. A common error in using videotapes is playing them with the volume set too loud.
2. Ask the participants questions before playing the segment. There are many different components to each segment that participants might choose to focus on—a form that a teacher in the video is using, how the teacher consistently relates spelling to writing and reading, or how students are encouraged to articulate what they are learning. If you don't ask a focusing question before the segment begins, you're likely to get an awkward silence when you begin a discussion later.
3. Have participants keep notes as they view the segment. Double-entry journals work well for helping participants focus on what they are viewing. Ask participants to divide a page into three columns and add the headings What I See, What It Makes Me Think About, and What I Could Try. These headings generate all kinds of interesting observations for small-group discussions. Written notes help narrow the participants' focus and prevent the conversation from becoming fragmented.

## Learning Words

Learning Words contains the following teaching segments:

- A K/1 class learns a high-frequency word (*went*), builds other words with the same sound (*bent*, *tent*, *sent*), uses these words to spell other words (*tent/tents*), uses knowledge of the word to help with other words (*sent/sentence*), and develops a word wall.
- A K/1 child in a writing conference with the teacher learns how to spell a high-frequency word (*had*) and develops a personal word book.
- A group of grade 2 children learns the process of proofreading, chooses personal words to learn, and learns those words.
- A grade 5 class learns the process of proofreading, chooses personal words to learn, and learns those words. The teacher also addresses a high-frequency word (*which*) that the children should know.

## Related Chapters in *Spelling K–8*

Chapter 16 Proofreading  
Chapter 17 High-Frequency Words  
Chapter 18 Personal Words to Learn

One or more of the chapters may be read before or after viewing the videotape. The book provides more detail than is shown on the tape, but the tape has the advantage of showing what the work looks like.

## Suggested Ways of Using the Videotape

It's worthwhile if teachers of various grade levels view the segments to see the similarities and differences across grades and to discuss how the experiences from one grade level might be applied to another grade level. Teachers of older grades benefit from watching the experiences in younger grade classrooms and vice versa.

View each of the segments and find the similarities in the way children across grade levels learn words, for instance:

- they use them in their writing
- they apply the “look, say, spell, cover, write, check” strategy
- they write words on erasable words boards so the whole class is involved, and the teacher can observe what the children know or do not know

## Discussion Points

- What aspects are different at each grade level?
- How did the learning of words change from K/1 to grades 2 and 5?
- How would children benefit if teachers throughout the grade levels used the same process for teaching words? How would this also benefit teachers and parents?
- What did the children learn about the process of learning class words that helped them learn individual words?
- Although the teacher in the grade 2 class is working with a group of children and using one child's piece of writing to demonstrate the process of proofreading, choosing, and learning words, how could this technique be used with an individual or with a whole class? Are there other ways that the process could be demonstrated?

## Other Workshop Suggestions

Teachers work in pairs or small groups to compare their own teaching experiences with what they see on the videotape. Here are two follow-up ideas:

1. Ask teachers to make a list of questions they have after watching the video. Chapters 16, 17, and 18 of *Spelling K–8* will likely have answers to the questions: for example, for answers to questions about assessment see pages 8–9, 221–222, 234–237, and 255. Use the index to find other appropriate pages. Have teachers read sections of the book and discuss what they find as answers and ask them to offer their own suggestions.
2. Ask teachers to think of an idea or process they could try in their own classrooms and establish a date to meet again to compare the results. Some teachers find it useful to try ideas in the following sequence:
  - apply the process to words currently being learned in the classroom
  - apply the process to words that the children select as appropriate words for the class to learn because they use them often in their writing
  - teach the children how to proofread and select suitable personal words to learn; then have them apply the process to learning personal words

## Exploring Sounds

Exploring Sounds contains the following teaching segments:

- A K/1 class learns about the sound /f/ by finding words that contain that sound and exploring the different ways the sound can be represented.
- A grade 2 class learns about the sound /ay/ (as in *paint* and *play*) by finding words that contain that sound and exploring the different ways the sound can be represented. The class also engages in word building by listing other words that the word paint helps them to spell, such as painter, painting, and paintbrush.
- A grade 5 class learns about the various ways to represent the /oo/ sound (as in *too* and *shoe*).

## Related Chapter in *Spelling K–8*

Chapter 7 Sounds

Chapter 7 may be read before or after viewing the videotape. The book provides more detail than is shown on the tape, but the tape has the advantage of showing what the work looks like.

## Suggested Ways of Using the Videotape

It's worthwhile if teachers of various grade levels view the segments to see the similarities and differences across grades and to discuss how the experiences from one grade level might be applied to another grade level. Teachers of older grades benefit from watching the experiences in younger grade classrooms and vice versa.

View each of the segments and find the similarities in the way children across grade levels learn about sounds in words, for instance:

- they listen for the sounds in words and use this strategy to help them spell words when they write
- they search for words with the specific sound, list the words, then organize them according to the different spelling patterns that represent the sound; this process of exploring sounds is consistent in grades K/1 and 2

## Discussion Points

- What aspects are different at each grade level?
- How did the exploring of sounds change from K/1 to grades 2 and 5?
- How would children benefit if teachers throughout the grade levels used the same process for teaching the phonetic strategy to help spell words? How would this also benefit teachers and parents?
- What did the children learn about the phonetic strategy that helped them learn about other sounds?
- Although the teachers on the videotape are working with the whole class in each segment, how would this same process be used with a small group who need more help using phonetic strategies to spell?
- Why did the K/1 teacher deal with consonant sounds but the grade 2 teacher worked with vowel sounds? (Refer to pages 86–89 in *Spelling K–8* for information about this.) How does this compare with what you do in your classroom or school?
- In the videotape the distinction between what is a sound and what is a letter or spelling pattern is stressed. Why is this important?
- How would it be misleading to tell children that a letter only represents one sound? Why is this particularly confusing for children whose first language is not English?

## Other Workshop Suggestions

Teachers work in pairs or small groups to compare their own teaching experiences with what they see on the videotape. Here are two follow-up ideas:

1. Ask teachers to make a list of questions they have after watching the video. Chapter 7 of *Spelling K–8* will likely have answers to the questions. Use the index to find other appropriate pages. Have teachers read sections of the book and discuss what they find as answers and ask them to offer their own suggestions.
2. Ask teachers to think of an idea or process they could try in their own classrooms and establish a date to meet again to compare the results. For information about the most suitable sounds to explore at different grade levels see the charts on pages 21–25 of *Spelling K–8*. And page 20 has information about how the exploring of sounds connects with other reading and writing experiences.

If kindergarten and grade 1 teachers feel that their students need more help developing phonemic awareness because the children find it difficult to hear phonemes in words, they should read Chapters 5 and 6 and try some of the ideas suggested in those chapters.

## Investigating Letters and Spelling Patterns

Investigating Letters and Spelling Patterns contains the following teaching segments:

- A grade 2 class learns about the spelling pattern *oo* and investigates how this spelling pattern can be pronounced in different ways. They find words with the *oo* spelling pattern and group the words according to the way they are pronounced.
- A small group in a K/1 class learn about the letter *t* by finding words that contain that letter. Then they group the words according to the position of the letter *t*.
- A grade 5 class is involved in interactive writing and thinks about how the visual strategy helps them to spell words.

## Related Chapters in *Spelling K–8*

Chapter 4 Letters

Chapter 8 Spelling Patterns

Chapters 4 and 8 may be read before or after viewing the videotape. The book provides more detail than is shown on the tape, but the tape has the advantage of showing what the work looks like.

## Suggested Ways of Using the Videotape

It's worthwhile if teachers of various grade levels view the segments to see the similarities and differences across grades and to discuss how the experiences from one grade level might be applied to another grade level. Teachers of older grades benefit from watching the experiences in younger grade classrooms and vice versa.

View each of the segments and find the similarities in the way children across grade levels learn about letters or spelling patterns in words, for instance:

- they think about what words look like and use this strategy to help them spell words when they write
- they search for words with the specific letter or spelling pattern, list the words, then organize them according to either their position in the word or the different ways the letter or spelling pattern may be pronounced; this process of exploring letters or spelling patterns is consistent in grades K/1 and 2

## Discussion Points

- What aspects are different at each grade level?
- How would you use the same process at any grade level?
- How would children benefit if teachers throughout the grade levels used the same process for teaching about the visual strategy to help spell words? How would this also benefit teachers and parents?

- What did the children learn about the visual strategy that helped them learn about other letters or spelling patterns?
- Although the teachers on the videotape are sometimes working with the whole class and sometimes working with a group in each segment, how would this same process be used with a small group of children who need more help using visual strategies to spell?
- Why did the K/1 teacher deal with letters but the grade 2 teacher work with spelling patterns? How does this compare with what you do in your classroom or school?
- In the videotape the distinction between what is a sound and what is a letter or spelling pattern is stressed. Why is this important?
- How would it be misleading to tell children that a letter only represents one sound? Why is this particularly confusing for children whose first language is not English?

## Other Workshop Suggestions

Teachers work in pairs or small groups to compare their own teaching experiences with what they see on the videotape. Here are two follow-up ideas:

1. Ask teachers to make a list of questions they have after watching the video. Chapters 4 and 8 of *Spelling K–8* will likely have answers to the questions. Use the index to find other appropriate pages. Have teachers read sections of the book and discuss what they find as answers and ask them to offer their own suggestions.
2. Ask teachers to think of an idea or process they could try in their own classrooms and establish a date to meet again to compare the results. For information about the most suitable spelling patterns to explore at different grade levels see the charts on pages 21–25 of *Spelling K–8*. And page 20 has information about how the exploring of letters or spelling patterns connects with other reading and writing experiences.

## Discovering Generalizations

Discovering Generalizations contains the following teaching segments:

- A grade 5 class revises and learns about the generalization for adding the suffixes *er* and *est* to words. They try to apply the generalization to some base words, such as *juicy* and *messy*, and the teacher evaluates what they know about how to do this.
- A grade 5 class learns about using the homophones *there*, *their*, and *they're*. They refer to examples of sentences they have collected where these words are used and discuss their ideas about how these words are used. The discussion involves the whole class and the children work in groups to formulate their ideas.
- A grade 2 class learns about the generalizations for forming plurals. They recall some plural words they have recently encountered and compare them with the singular forms. They also find more examples during a shared reading experience.

## Related Chapters in *Spelling K–8*

Chapter 11 Homophones

Chapter 12 Plurals

Chapter 13 Prefixes and Suffixes

Chapter 15 Apostrophes for Possessives and Plurals

Chapters 11 and 12 may be read before or after viewing the videotape. The book provides more detail than is shown on the tape, but the tape has the advantage of showing what the work looks like. Chapters 13 and 15 also deal with examples of learning generalizations so they may be read after viewing and discussing the videotape.

## Suggested Ways of Using the Videotape

It's worthwhile if teachers of various grade levels view the segments to see the similarities and differences across grades and to discuss how the experiences from one grade level might be applied to another grade level. Teachers of older grades benefit from watching the experiences in younger grade classrooms and vice versa.

View each of the segments and find the similarities in the way children across grade levels learn about generalizations, for instance:

- they think about how to apply prefixes and suffixes to base words and use this strategy to help them spell words when they write
- they search for examples of the words or sentences that help them form hypotheses about a particular aspect of spelling, they list the examples, then think about generalizations that could be applied; this process of discovering generalizations is similar in grades 2 and 5

## Discussion Points

- What aspects are different at each grade level?
- How would you use the same process at any grade level?
- How would children benefit if teachers throughout the grade levels used the same process for teaching generalizations? How would this also benefit teachers and parents?
- What did the children learn about generalizations that helped them learn about other generalizations?
- Although the teachers on the videotape are working with the whole class in each segment, how would this same process be used with a small group of children who need more help using generalization strategies to spell?
- Why do you think there is no segment on this aspect of spelling in a K/1 class? Would children in K/1 and other grades also form generalizations about the most common ways to represent sounds? How would this be done? How does this compare with what you do in your classroom or school?

## Other Workshop Suggestions

Teachers work in pairs or small groups to compare their own teaching experiences with what they see on the videotape. Here are two follow-up ideas:

1. Ask teachers to make a list of questions they have after watching the video. Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 15 of *Spelling K–8* will likely have answers to the questions. Use the index to find other appropriate pages. Have teachers read sections of the book and discuss what they find as answers and ask them to offer their own suggestions.
2. Ask teachers to think of an idea or process they could try in their own classrooms and establish a date to meet again to compare the results. For information about the most suitable generalizations to discover at different grade levels see the charts on pages 21–25 of *Spelling K–8*. And page 20 has information about how discovering generalizations connects with other reading and writing experiences.

